

Record of Conversation

Person Tommy McFall, American Airlines Inc,
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Telephone Number 817-967-1069
Place Fort Worth, Texas
Date June 5, 1997
Time 11 am
By Lasseigne

Introduction

The text which follows is not a verbatim record of my conversation with Mr. Tommy McFall. It is my interpretation of what he has related to me and has been developed with the help of my hand-written notes of the conversation. This record is correct and complete to the best of my recollection.

Record of Conversation

- Around 8:22 pm on August 28, 1997, Flight 606, N131AA, a McDonnell Douglas DC10-30, arrived at Louis Munos International Airport (SJU), San Juan Puerto Rico from Dallas-Ft. Worth (DFW).
- By 10:30 pm AA service personnel completed the aircraft cleaning operations and the aircraft remained over night at SJU.
- Around 5:30 am on April 29, 1997, a San Juan Airport Police K-9 Team arrived at the AA ramp area and requested "use of an aircraft for a training exercise." An AA ramp technician met with the K-9 personnel and reportedly agreed to their request. The K-9 Team next proceeded to N131AA and conducted the training exercise. *[According to AA policy and practices, the K-9 Team should have requested authorization to use the aircraft from the AA Service Manager.]*
- The San Juan Airport Police K-9 Team is under the auspices of the FAA's K-9 Explosive Detection Program.
- During the training exercise in which explosive training aids were used, the K-9 Team reportedly received a call of a live bomb threat off the airport. Shortly afterwards, the K-9 Team left the aircraft without advising AA personnel that the training exercise had been completed. *[The training aid had been placed in the passenger cabin and was later recovered by a flight crewmember while the aircraft was enroute to Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas. Apparently the dog trainer and handler did not adequately log the return of all the training aids to their storage containers at the completion of the*

proficiency exercise and as a result the K-9 explosives detection team left the aircraft without securing all of the explosive training aids.]

- At 10:44 am N131AA departs SJU as a regularly scheduled passenger flight, Flight 633 enroute to DFW.
- Around 12pm, the SJU K-9 Team returned to the AA ramp/gate area looking for the aircraft that was used in the training exercise. After contacting the AA Maintenance Supervisor, they are advised that the aircraft was enroute to DFW. The K-9 Team personnel asked about the return of the aircraft; and they were advised by the AA supervisor that the aircraft would return the next day, April 30. *[American Airlines was not notified immediately that there was a problem in regard to the accountability of the training aids at SJU until about 1-hour later when FAA Jacksonville Center contacted the flight crew requesting someone to retrieve the aid.]*
- The K-9 Team reportedly called the local FAA office at SJU and advised that they had left one block of C-4 onboard the aircraft in the passenger cabin.
- Shortly afterwards, the local FAA contacted the AA Service Manager and requested information about the destination of Flight 633. *[Note: Flight 633 was scheduled to arrive at DFW around 2:40 pm.]*
- Around 12:50 pm, the FAA Jacksonville Center contacted Flight 633 and requested a crewmember to discretely retrieve the explosive training aid located in the first class passenger cabin magazine rack, 1-J. *[Note: FAA Jacksonville Center had been contacted by the local SJU FAA. This was the first time AA personnel was aware of the misplaced training aid.]*
- On arrival at DFW around 2:40 pm, the training aid was turned over to the DFW K-9 Explosive Detection Team.

Discussion Paper on Security Related Recommendations

I. Gore Commission Staff's Recommendations

1. *Expand efforts to eliminate the threat of explosives in mail.*

Concur with this recommendation except for the following:

- Don't believe that x-raying alone is the obvious solution, it could be one of several possible solutions. Also the newer CSX-5000 X-ray Units have better than a 30% failure rate. Therefore, much more needs to be done where mail is **first** offered into the system for transportation, i.e. mail profiling, spot inspections and public education.
- Don't want to become too focused on just terrorism alone. High volumes of hazardous materials are shipped daily and without proper transportation packaging. Therefore, should also consider risks imposed by a hazardous materials shipment aboard a passenger airplane.
- From the Safety Board's perspective on aviation safety, hazardous materials releases involving flammable gases or oxidizers aboard a plane could have the same catastrophic results as a bomb.
- Anybody can ship hazardous materials including explosives. For example, ammunition, pyrotechnics devices, oxidizers, acids, volatile solvents all can produce the same results as explosives if they are not properly packaged according to DOT requirements.
- Probably the greatest threat (in view of the large amount to hazardous materials being shipped) is the potential for noncompliance with DOT regulations and ignorance on the part of the general public, shipper or freight forwarder on what DOT actually requires to ship hazardous materials. These issues on hazardous materials compliance are being covered in the recent Valujet, FedEx accidents and have been covered comprehensively in the Pan Am Logan Report, and two Special Studies on Hazardous Materials Compliance.

2. *Expand efforts to eliminate the threat of explosives in cargo*

Concur with this recommendation, but as noted there are problems with X-ray techniques and more elaborate techniques will create greater challenges.

- It would not be technically feasible to X-ray a large percentage of freight cargo since x-rays do not penetrate through large bulk packages. Solutions are not just around the

corner. For example, the French are attempting to develop a prototype neutron scanning unit which is intended make detailed images of cargo containers by bombarding the contents with neutrons.

- As an alternative approach, the FAA will be putting more emphasis on inspections of Carrier/Shipper/Freight Forwarder operations. As a result of ValueJet, FAA will be hiring more Haz Mat inspectors and should be able to focus to a greater depth on shipper/freight forwarder inspections and thereby monitor compliance, particularly with regard to hazardous materials shipping/packaging procedures and security plans.
3. No comment.

II. UPDATED INTERIM SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS BY GORE COMMISSION

1. *Strengthen local consortia*

Concur.

- To be effective, the FAA should develop in coordination with local Consortia uniform standards, system-wide. Hopefully a model program plan could be developed by the FAA in coordination with local Consortia so that **each** airport doesn't have to go and "reinvent the wheel" as to its particular security vulnerability needs and action plans.

2/3/6/9. *Explosive technology enhancement etc.*

Concur.

- As demonstrated by its K-9 Explosive Detection Program, FAA has limited in-house explosive expertise. The FAA primarily contracts with consultants to provide the expertise. Moreover, the FAA Explosives Team is a relatively new group with limited accident investigation experience.
- Recommend the formation of an independent explosives safety advisory group (composed of NTSB, DOT, FBI, ATF, DOD and NASA personnel) to provide accident investigation technical support.
- Doubt if the FAA maintains a data base to evaluate the effectiveness of present explosive detection systems being used at various airports. This data base could

be shared and compared with information collected by foreign governments for counter-terrorism intelligence.

4/5. No comment.

7/8. Concur.

9. No comment.

10. Concur.

III. Commissioner Shea's Recommendations

No specific comments. There appears to be a viable problem identified in each of the recommendations but there does not appear sufficient detail in the discussions to support the proposed solutions or fixes.

IV. Commissioner Williams' Recommendations

Most of these problems have been addressed by the commission but I think the last two recommendations are significant. One recommendation addresses the need for a victim liaison who serves as a spokesman for the victims and may help to cut the bureaucratic strings for the victim's families. The last recommendation addresses delays in achieving security changes as a result of the Pam Am Flt 103 recommendations. These are two key areas in which the Safety Board is focusing on in its investigation of TWA 800.

Hazardous Materials-Security Group

Investigation of the FAA K-9 explosives detection program.

Chronology

- **Meeting: Sept 18, 1996 Washington, DC at FAA Headquarters.**
Staff met with the FAA National K-9 Program Coordinator. Reviewed procedures for handling, transporting and placing explosive training aids on board aircraft prior to scheduled flights.
- **Meetings: Sept 20 and 21, 1996, St. Louis, MO**
Staff met with St. Louis Airport Police and FAA CAS Operations-St. Louis. Staff interviewed key personnel who conducted K-9 training exercise on board N93119 on June 10, 1996.
- **Group Reports:** Completed group chairman's factual report on January 17, 1997, and Analysis Report on March 7, 1997.
- **Green Sheet:** Board issued Recommendation A-97-11 to the FAA on February 18, 1997.
- **San Juan, Puerto Rico, April 29, 1997**
Explosives training aid incident on a regularly scheduled international passenger and cargo flight from Puerto Rico to Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas
- **Meeting: October 28, 1998, FAA Headquarters**
FAA briefing on new security procedures adopted in response to A-97-11.
- **FAA Response to A-97-11**
In their response dated Dec 14, 1999, the FAA has developed and implemented procedures using a new Explosives Detection Canine Team Training Log. This new log requires the type and number of training aids used along with verification that the training aids were removed from the aircraft/airport environment. The Safety Board's proposed response is currently being circulated for review by the Members.